

IN the last few days London has been invaded and conquered by two men representing war and peace.

Some 1,200 people attended the English-Speaking Union dinner in honour of General Norstad, the new Supreme Commander of the N.A.T.O. Forces. It was unfortunate that the loud-speaker apparatus went on strike as Earl Attlee was introducing him, but science came to the rescue and in a few minutes all was good.

The general, in civilian evening dress, justified the advance notices of his good looks. He seems younger than his 49 years and his voice is a pleasant baritone operating on the G-string with a range of three or four notes. But then, all male Americans are baritones.

To the practised political ear there was a sharp conflict between the speeches of the general and Mr. Harold Macmillan. The Supreme Commander maintained that the forces of N.A.T.O. must be strong enough to meet any threat. With a deceptively languid air the Prime Minister said that insurance was a necessary thing, but the cost of over-insurance could destroy the very thing we are trying to preserve.

It was not a mere play on words. On the contrary, it was almost a British declaration of independence.

On the Job

THERE is, however, a sharp distinction between General Norstad in tails and in uniform. I had the opportunity to see and hear him as the Generalissimo, discussing, with huge maps to illustrate his arguments, the strategy to be employed by the N.A.T.O. Forces.

His mind was like quicksilver and his hands moved swiftly and expressively like a conductor without a baton. He speaks rapidly, but is never incoherent.

It is no mean achievement for a country to have produced in quick succession two such leaders as General Gruenther and General Norstad, who realise that the military mind must be closely allied to that of the civilian.

Melodious Giant

THE second invader and conqueror was no less a person than the prodigious Russian Gregor Platigorsky, the tall, massive 'cellist who had a brilliant triumph at the Festival Hall in Sir William Walton's new concerto.

The day before the performance he held forth to me for more than an hour on the adventures that had brought him from Russia to his fame in the Western world.

"I said to Lenin in 1921," he roared, "that I must leave

Russia. Lenin said 'No.' But I took my 'cello and crossed to Poland. My present 'cello is two hundred and fifty years old—a Stradivarius. When I travel with it on the trains in America they say: 'Where is the rest of your band?' Ho! Ho! The Americans are great people. They say a man is good. Or they say he is no good. That is all."

At the Royal Festival Hall



GREGOR PLATIGORSKY

the famous instrument was as shiny and fresh as if it had just been delivered by its creator, but against Platigorsky's massive height it looked as if he were playing a violin in the manner of a 'cello. He was recalled seven or eight times and carried the instrument high in the air as if it were of no more weight than a fan. His mother-in-law, Baroness Edouard de Rothschild, one of the leading hostesses of Paris, came over especially for the concert.

I have a feeling that Lauris Norstad and Gregor Platigorsky would find much in common, for both of them have a gust of life.

An Elizabethan Departs

WHITEHALL is not likely ever to see again so dominating a figure as Lord Vansittart. He had an intellect and personality that at times made him seem the chief figure at the Foreign Office instead of the Secretaries of State under whom he served.

Inevitably his influence spread far beyond the normal confines of the Civil Service. Traditionally it was his duty to advise his political chief and then carry out the agreed policy. But the roles, it is said, were frequently reversed. There were rumblings of disapproval in high places that he wielded too much authority.

He was fond of bridge and used to play occasionally at St. James's Club, where he brought to the game a rigidity which frowned on any vagaries of bidding. The truth is that he was a personality of many parts who felt, like the Elizabethans, that the full man should em-

brace the arts, the Court and the senate.

With clear eyes he saw the menace of Hitler and found himself completely at variance with the policy of appeasing the tiger. Since he would not change his view it became inevitable that his career as the Permanent Head of the Foreign Office would come to an end.

He was relieved of that post early in 1938 and was given the attractive but vague appointment of Diplomatic Adviser to His Majesty's Government—

which had no intention of taking his advice. He was essentially a man of paradox who loved beauty and reality with equal intensity. If he had not been drawn into the formalism of Whitehall he might well have had a distinguished career in the world of letters.

Quietly Does It

WHO is the most silent Member of the House of Commons? Let me calm the fears of honourable Members

by stating at once that the honour belongs to Mr. Edward Heath.

As the Government Chief Whip he is confined pretty much to those short but agreeable words: "I move that this House do now adjourn." It is true that he sometimes addresses the 1922 Committee, which embraces all the Tory back-benchers; but then, those meetings are held in private.

Yet he wields enormous influence and authority. He advises the Prime Minister on

the feeling of the House, he discusses the business for the next week, he is "the usual channels," and he soothes the savage breast when Members imagine they have a grievance. Mr. Heath used to play the organ, but now he has forsaken sweet harmonies for the cacophony and discords of political life.

Suaviter in Modo

THE personality and the technique of the last four Conservative Chief Whips make a fascinating study. Mr. Heath is so decent and so fair that he makes an M.P. feel like a cad if he misses a division. By contrast, his predecessor, Patrick Buchan-Hepburn (now to be Lord Hailles), was so shocked at any dereliction of duty and treated the offender almost like a juvenile delinquent. Yet James Stuart, who reigned in the Whips' Office before him, took an entirely different attitude. In his calm, lazy voice he would give the impression that he too would have enjoyed playing truant, but seeing that they were all in it together it would be better to stay on the job. He offered it merely as a suggestion, not as a reproach.

Whereas David Margesson (now Viscount Margesson), who was the last Conservative Chief Whip before James Stuart, carried himself like a slave-owner in the far South. He was a martinet and orders were orders. Yet such are the vagaries of human nature that the pack followed him and was sorry when he left the House.

The Hunting of the Sark

MY comments last week on the Island of Sark have brought me some lively letters as well as an enlightening book called "Sark Discovered," decorated with many photographs.

It seems from letters patent under the Great Seal in 1565 that the Queen granted the island to Hilary de Carteret on condition that he paid each year fifty shillings of "good and lawful money."

Swinburne in 1833 was moved to some of the worst poetry ever written:

Here earth lies lordly, triumphal
as heaven is above her.
And splendid and strange as the
sea that upbeats as an ark,
As a sign for the rapture of
storm-spent eyes to discover,
Sark.

Our Australian-born friend Desmond Young, who loves to visit the island, should remedy this poetical deficit.

But he could not improve on

the dedication of this little book which reads:

Inscribed
to
Sibyl Mary Hathaway, O.B.E.
Dame of the Island of Sark and its
Dependencies
Who has ever defended her State
against its enemies.

Hamlet, at Dagenham

NOW for a moment let us commiserate with Sir Patrick Hennessy, who was



SIR PATRICK HENNESSY

intended by nature to be an Irish Hamlet communing with the moon and has become instead a much-troubled industrialist.

Sir Patrick has a pleasing softness to his voice and what might be described as a sad twinkle in his eye. He served in the first world war with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and had almost as tempestuous a time in the second world war with the Ministry of Aircraft

Production which extemporised so successfully and untraditionally in the Battle of Britain.

But now as a Ford Motor magnate and the chairman of Briggs Motor Bodies he has been confronted with labour troubles of such recurring intensity that he must sometimes regret the very invention of the internal combustion engine.

L'Envoi

A Tory verdict on the North Lewisham result:

Not good.
Not bad.
It was the woman who did it.

People and Words

"There are too many obituary notices about Britain—and in Mark Twain's immortal words they are greatly exaggerated."

—SIR HARCUS GAZDA,
British Ambassador to the
United States.

"It is not dishonourable to want to be richer than we are."

—SIR DAVID FORCES,
President of the Board of Trade.

"The great lesson of recent years has been that dependence on the United Nations cannot be a substitute for foreign policy."

—MR. JOHN S. MACLAY,
Secretary of State for Scotland.

"One reason why Britain and America have learned to live together is that most assuredly we would not live long apart."

—GENERAL LAURIS NORSTAD,
Supreme Allied Commander,
Europe.

"If it is wrong, as we are constantly being reminded, for an individual to exploit the community, then it must be at least as bad for the community to exploit the individual."

—VISCOUNT HAILLES,
Minister of Education.

"Peace rests uneasily on the balance of fear."

—MR. DUNCAN SANDYS,
Minister of Defence.